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LONGFELLOW'S "NATURE"

Among the ideas and studies for literary composition in Southey's *Common-place Book* (Fourth Series, p. 48) is the following epitaph:

> As careful nurses to the bed do lay
> Their children which too long would wanton play,
> So to prevent all my ensuing crimes
> Nature my nurse laid me to bed betimes.

This is described as an epitaph found "in some part of Yorkshire." There is evidently here the basis for a sonnet; but I do not know that Southey ever used the idea. The lines, however, have such a marked similarity to Longfellow's sonnet "Nature" that it would seem that he, presumably finding the suggestion going to waste in the *Common-place Book*, made it the basis for his poem:

> As a fond mother, when the day is o'er,
> Leads by the hand her little child to bed,
> Half willing, half reluctant to be led,
> And leave his broken playthings on the floor,
> Still gazing at them through the open door,
> Nor wholly reassured and comforted
> By promises of others in their stead,
> Which, though more splendid, may not please him more;
> So Nature deals with us, and takes away
> Our playthings one by one, and by the hand
> Leads us to rest so gently, that we go
> Scarce knowing if we wish to go or stay,
> Being too full of sleep to understand
> How far the unknown transcends the what we know.

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